



Matt: Hello everybody. This is Matt and Laura Grundler, and welcome to another episode of The Creatively Connected Classroom. We have another special guest, amazing friend that we've gotten to know over the past year specifically.

Laura: Another team member from Education Closet, so that's real exciting.

Matt: That's right, by the name of Shawna Longo. Welcome, Shawna. We appreciate you coming on to our podcast and having a conversation today.

Shawna: Thank you guys. I'm so excited to be here.

Laura: Shawna, tell us a little bit about yourself. I know I was following you on social media, and you were down here in Texas for the big TMEA, which is the Texas Music Educators Conference, which is massive from what I understand. I know a little bit about you, but tell our audience about your background, your music background, all of those things.

Shawna: I've been teaching music for 18 years. I've done everything from Head Start through high school. I've done guest lecturing for college, even. I have one of those coming up soon actually, I love doing that. I love going back and talking to the education majors about the reality [inaudible 00:01:31]. That's one of my favorite things to do. Kind of blow it up a little bit for them.

Laura: I'm glad someone will do it.

Shawna: Oh yeah, I love it.

Laura: Give them the reality of what they're going to walk into.

Shawna: Yeah, it's not what they're teaching them. Well, some of it is.

Laura: No, yes. That is for another time. But I would definitely agree that our professors ... Anyways, I'm working with a few that understand, which is nice. But yeah, that's definitely wonderful that you're doing that.

Shawna: Yeah. So I teach middle school general music, music technology in New Jersey and Northwestern New Jersey, about an hour plus outside of Manhattan. I've been there for nine years now. I do a lot of arts integration, steam coaching. I



was integral in the creation of our Maker's Spaces. At the middle school we call it our innovation lab.

Matt: Oh, I like that.

Shawna: Yeah. Which is, it just has a different connotation than Maker's Space. So that was, oh man, that was four years of blood, sweat, tears, research, visits, and all of the above. So I'm excited to kind of talk about it today, and hopefully save some people some time and energy. But yeah, Texas, everything is bigger in Texas is so true, because TMEA is like ... Like last year, I was in awe the whole time when I came. But now this year, I felt like I could really enjoy it more, because I knew what to expect.

Laura: Yeah, that's like we've only been to ISTY once, and we were so overwhelmed.

Matt: Holy cow.

Laura: That what do we do? It's so big.

Matt: It is so different-

Laura: Than an art conference.

Matt: We're just like looking at each other going, hi. What do we do?

Shawna: I'm getting up and presenting at ISTY this year.

Laura: Oh good.

Shawna: We'll see how it compares to Texas, TMEA.

Laura: I don't know. Texas really can be a whole 'nother world sometimes. There used to be an ad, Texas, a whole 'nother world. We're like, yeah.

Shawna: But it's a great world.

Matt: Oh, no, absolutely.

Laura: We're very happy to be Texans. Transplant Texans, but it's been very good to us in art ed, and it's definitely a great state. But it is big. Very big. So I don't even know where to start. Music, in my mind, does not automatically relate to



technology. I don't know that I've seen a lot of technology applications in the music classroom. I'd like to talk to you about that first.

Shawna: Yeah, so my room, when I got this job, there literally wasn't a pencil in the desk. I was coming out of administration and back into the classroom. The principal, after I accepted the position, then took me on like the final tour of the school. The last room he took me to was a brand new math lab. I was like, oh. I honestly, besides setting up microphones and speakers, I hadn't done a ton of tech in my past teaching experience. In terms of application within the classroom setting, and he looked at me and he's like, would you want to use this room at all? I was like, uh, yeah. When is it available? It ended up being available for when I taught 6th grade, which was perfect, because it kind of let me get my feet wet with it, and start to get comfortable, and then start to expand out across multiple grade levels.

Shawna: So I started with Garage Band, and had the kids ... I still use Garage Band, as well as Sound Trap, which is now internet based, and I adore for so many implications. So when you're bringing in the technology through creation, production, arranging of music, my students perform using virtual instruments on iPads as well as real instruments, but utilizing them in an authentic capacity. I have the other 75% of the kids that aren't the band kids, that aren't the music kids, and so to give them access to have success and entry level into recording. Maybe, let's create our own things, let's not just use stock loops. They're comfortable with a digital means of performance, until I get them to place by 8th grade where they're learning guitar and those kinds of things.

Shawna: So that's kind of how I approach technology in there. But then I also pull in Micky Makeys, but we'll use it ... And coding, I do a lot of coding with my kids. I teach writing, composing music using coding and LSDJ, which is like chip tune music, eight bit, think like Mario Brothers theme, like '80s video games style. So when they're coding that into the program, there is a direct correlation to how traditional composers compose music. So making those connections, and showing them how they can manipulate sound waves to create these wild and crazy sounds within the program. Then I do coding, also, in another capacity, where I pull in scratch, and they code in, and they perform on virtual instruments to code in different pitches. Then we use Micky Makeys as our instrument and they have to compose and perform the school using the Micky Makeys with their code.



Matt: That's cool.

Shawna: That's kind of a little taste of how I've brought tech into the music world, and made it fun for the kids. They just know, who knows what she's going to come up with.

Matt: Well, I mean, I think being in the arts, I think that's almost kind of a given, I think, from a lot of kids is, what are they going to do now? What are they going to have us do? With what?

Laura: I will say thought, Shawna, I mean, honestly, I've spent most of my career in middle schools, and I have never seen a middle school music room like that. It was amazing music educators, but I just haven't seen that tech integration. We're very focused on the traditional choral exercises, and just ... I'm really thinking about 6th grade band, they're just trying to learn their instruments. It's a little bit of a mess, you know? I always think that 6th grade music teachers are the most amazing people in the world, because they're taking these kids from the beginning of the year, have never touched an instrument, to the end of the year, where they're having a full concert. But I just, one of the things I've had a lot of conversations with our instrumental coordinator about is that creativity, that being able to improve, that happens in the jazz setting, is lacking a lot of times. He's working really hard on building that into our curriculum vertically. I know, just listening to what you're saying is so embedded in that creative aspect, that kids don't always get in the music world.

Shawna: Right. I think sometimes when you make it too technical for them with like, you have to know exactly how to compose, and how this relates to that. In my approach from that, I'm like, start on C, and on C, figure it out. They know what sounds good and what sounds bad. They'll ask, and they're usually much harsher critics than I am of what they're doing. But giving them that, it's okay to just play around and always record, because you can always edit, undo, but you never can remake something in a moment that's there. So always have it recording. Be willing to kind of put yourself out there. I think that that's kind of a different approach than many. I was a former band director.

Shawna: So I didn't approach my band room like this. If I went back, although I don't plan on it, into a band realm, I would totally tech it up. I've done a lot of workshops for band folks on how to successfully bring technology into their classrooms without it being, ugh, just another thing. If you want to teach improvisation,



there are amazing platforms out there, like Music First, and some other ones that really have offerings that can help facilitate that in a manner that, to me, it's best applied, like flipped classroom, outside of school.

Shawna: So instead of sending them and saying, practice for 20 minutes, and you don't know what they're really doing, their parents are going to sign off on it, and you have no idea at the end of the day what actually happened. There is platforms out there that can guide the instruction, and especially if you're talking improvisation or creation, and kind of keep that going, especially if they're one to one, and devices aren't an issue. So that's my thoughts.

Matt: You brought up something that made me start to wonder, and I think it's something Laura and I have talked about on a many a time occasion. With Maker Spaces, that kind of being the big buzz word, and it has been, probably, for the past two, maybe three years?

Laura: I think when STEM became kind of a thing, as with Maker Spaces, I started reading about the Maker's movement about five or six years ago. I struggled with it. I really love this idea of the innovation lab, as you called it.

Matt: I think what I've seen in certain areas of where it becomes the library, or it becomes the ... There is no real foundation to it. How do you get someone to then kind of embrace that? Because most of the time, they're too busy trying to embrace the craziness of, oh, it's Maker Space, here we go. Have fun, do whatever.

Shawna: You're absolutely right. I feel like the focus too often is on the stuff.

Matt: Yes.

Shawna: In and fill the room. I would consider another, I'll coin this one, if you love innovation lab, imaginarium.

Laura: Yes.

Shawna: I really wanted that one. But the innovation lab stuck. But I'm okay with that, but that was my second choice.



Matt: I think that terminology, innovation, or imagination, it lends itself to not be just, not to just be art, or not to just be science, or not to just be ... It's kind of a hodgepodge of everything.

Shawna: Yeah. I think the missing piece beyond focusing on this stuff is the PD. Really, they'll say, oh we asked them what they wanted, and what they could use, and we gave them an hour and a half workshop, or the day before, the first day of school we gave them some workshops. That's not enough. I'm a firm believer that in order for any steam arts integration ... Well, maybe not arts integration, because that's getting to a bigger umbrella.

Shawna: But specifically for steam, in order for it to really work, there's got to be someone in charge of it on a bigger scale, that is not only overseeing how it's being rolled out, but is there also to assist the teachers, to model, to be a sounding board, to sit in the back of the room and not evaluate, but like just give feedback or walk around and assist the kids, or help with the co planning, a resource, a coach. I think that a lot of districts are missing that boat. They're like, we can't afford that. But you just spent a hundred thousand dollars on a space with stuff that's going to sit there and not be used.

Shawna: You've got to have that sustained PD, and you've got to have that one person steering the ship. Who is trying to pull in the community outreach and make connections with them, who is pulling in outside partners. The teachers don't have time for all of that stuff. You really want it to make an impact on the kids, you've got to kind of think more globally with it. But I'll tell you, the best quote I ever found, and I'm going to read off my laptop, because I wanted to make sure I got this one in this podcast. It's from Gary Stager, "The best Maker Space is the space between your ears."

Matt: Oh, absolutely.

Laura: Oh, that's perfect.

Shawna: Right?

Laura: Yes.

Shawna: It's the best, because people ... It takes away the stuff. It's not about the stuff. It's what you do with it.



Laura: I totally understand.

Matt: Yeah, we get it.

Laura: Every time we always have a child, or a dog, or someone pop in during our-

Matt: Or multiple children-

Laura: Yes, yes.

Shawna: I forgot to tell him whether he could or couldn't, we usually have a code as to whether he can photobomb. Anyways, I just love that quote. I think it really, it focuses on where my head, literally my head, this whole movement. It's not stuff, it's not the stuff.

Laura: You know, you hit the nail on the head in a lot of ways in that, just the few things you just said. Not having somebody to guide the implementation and the ongoing implementation, I am starting to see some Maker Spaces in our elementary schools kind of fade away. They're just not being used successfully, and so teachers don't want to go in there. I hear that, especially from Twitter, different people talking. Just saying, it's just not a place where I feel comfortable, because they don't have the ongoing ... Yeah.

Shawna: Support. They don't have that coach saying, hey, here is a great ... You have this unit coming up, here is a great connection. You want to go in and I'll teach your kids, or, you know what I mean? Like, and not every teacher is going to be comfortable with having someone else teach their kids. But it's understanding the relationships and developing teachers to make the connections for them, because they can't ... They have so much to cover in so little time that now adding this whole other layer is just, it's a lot for them. I totally get that. If they don't have that one go to person that's kind of pushing them along in their way, differentiated instruction for teachers, right?

Laura: Yes.

Matt: Oh yeah.

Laura: Yes.

Shawna: But that's what they need. They need someone making those connections for them that's also then there to support them in the role with the kids.



Laura: You know, my only experience with that is that we've implemented iPads in our art rooms. It's been an ongoing process. If I had just done a one and done, I would have teachers ... I still have teachers, there is a continuum, right, like you were just saying with differentiation, there is a continuum of those teachers that jump in, and they just start touching stuff, and figuring out apps, and going for it. They just dive in, right? Then you've got the ones that are like, what is this device you gave me? Why do I need to touch it? What's its purpose? They can't ... Until they see it over and over multiple times, they're not really going to play and learn it themselves, so how can they possibly implement it with their students? So there is this just wide continuum when you're working just like you would with the classroom. I always think how it's funny that we don't consider that when we're educating teachers.

Shawna: Absolutely. But you have to consider it, because everybody is coming in with a different set of background, a different home life, and I'm sorry, no matter what, they don't check it completely at the door. Some days are better than others, we all know that. In a full moon, it affects the teachers too. I spill my coffee in the main office while trying to sign in, because I was carrying too many things, you know. We all have things that affect us as much as we don't want them to, but they do. So I think that willingness to constantly grow and learn, sometimes we get so bogged down in the mundane and the administrative side of teaching that, again, they don't necessarily tell you all about, and can't prepare you for. I think that there is so much more administrative stuff now than when I started teaching back in the day. I don't see that going away by any means.

Laura: No.

Shawna: I only see it potentially getting more cumbersome. So I feel like making it okay for them, and letting them know they have support, and I think that that goes such a long way. Such a long way.

Laura: So go backwards in time for us a little bit, and tell us about how ... So you walk into this building, there is a math lab, you're teaching general music. How does that experience translate into creating an innovation lab in your campus? What were the trials and tribulations with that?

Shawna: So for me, I mean, I got to start from scratch. There was literally not a pencil in the desk, no curriculum, no nothing. The curriculum was a set of standards. I'm





like, this is not a curriculum. I ended being a supervisor on August 31st and started teaching September 1st.

Laura: Holy cow.

Shawna: So I mean, I had, while I was still admin working, I would then be at home like, okay, what am I going to teach? Trying to develop units, and doing the research, and getting online and finding what was out there, and what might work. I knew, I had a good experience with the curriculum. It was important for me to make connections to the other seven periods of my kids' day. So what are they learning in those other contents? How can I tap into that and use it as ... Because I knew what music skills I want to teach. So I don't care what lens I teach them through. So if I can teach it through a lens that's going to tap into something else they're learning, it's just better for my kids. I've always believed that, and it's always been kind of how I've worked. So as the years progressed, and the administration saw what my students were producing, they saw the excitement for the courses, they saw less of my kids in the office-

Matt: Wait, that happens?

Shawna: It was like a revolving door from what I heard. Whereas now, it's got to be, you've got to really ... There have got to be real issues to get sent out of my room. You know? They saw that. They knew my experience. So then they supported it, and it evolved to me having a different lab, where they bought me new Macs, because those were getting a little bit older. Then I was between two rooms. Then another class in a bigger room was being cut, so I said, hey, could I have my lab and my music room all in one in this bigger space? So it evolved to that, which was awesome. Then at the same time, our superintendent came in and was realizing that there was, the student engagement was down because there was such a focus on the standardized tests. So she was bringing ... She was, in her previous career, a kindergarten teacher, so we know they're all about engagement.

Laura: They understand play, and centers.

Shawna: Yes. So arts integration was kicking off in New Jersey. So she sent a bunch of us that she knew would jump on board. If I heard the word arts and I was like, I'm in this, because if I'm not in it, then they're probably going to steer it wrong. So I need to get on board, I need to learn all about this, I need to embrace my ... Just learn it all and help steer the ship, so the ship doesn't go awry, and then



we're left like outside. Not all of my colleagues jumped on board with it. So because I did, I was invited to meetings. Actually, one of the first workshops they sent me to was to hear Susan Riley speak, which was like-

Laura: Wow.

Shawna: Yeah. Then it kind of evolved from there. They brought in Crayola, they did PD for the admin. They invited a very small contingent of us arts teachers that wanted to, to come back in the summer with the admin and help develop a program plan. I had a principal who was super supportive, we have a really great arts team in my school specifically. We mesh really well, visual arts, band, and me. It's just the three of us. So we were brought into the fold to help guide that. Then as the arts integration was kicking off, they started adding stipend positions for us, where we were facilitators, coaches, or other teachers. I even had time in my schedule, an extra period a day, to be able to collaborate with teachers and be able to work with them. Then it became they wanted to focus on the steam.

Shawna: So then it was start the research, see what else other people have done. What's out there? What can we put in this space? We had a ton of empty classrooms. We don't right now, but we did at the time. So we had this space to make. We took three classrooms and made one huge innovation lab. We blew the walls out between them. Then I also helped out with the younger, the elementary schools in determining, how can we scaffold this in thinking K to 12 and what would be appropriate based on not only the students, but then the buildings, and what's available, and budgets, and how do we roll this out? We chose to roll it out kind of in four, five, six through eight, then three, four, space carts in one, two simultaneously, and now we're looking towards a high school.

Shawna: So we kind of went from the middle and went out with it. Then it was, they would tap into us to offer the PD to the teachers. So we were doing workshops, we were in the plans to make the workshops throughout the school year, and what do you want to touch upon? What's going to be the focus? Who do you want to hit when? We're trying to get out to department meetings, and faculty meetings. It's a big process. Then our superintendent changed, and things have shifted slightly. There has been a budget crisis in [inaudible 00:23:22], and I'm sure elsewhere. But it really hit hard. So we don't have those ... I don't have the free time in my schedule anymore. The stipend is not there. But I'm still working with teachers, just because. It's what we do. So that's kind of how that all



evolved. I would just say that for every plan you make, have like ... Shoot, what is it? Shoot for the moon and it's okay if you land amongst the stars. Ask for more than you want or think you can get, and then-

Laura: I'm a big proponent of that, actually.

Shawna: Yeah. Then know-

Laura: [inaudible 00:23:59].

Shawna: Yeah, like here is my non negotiable, here is my baseline, but don't go in telling them that's your baseline. Ask for more. You really have to take the time to determine why you're doing this, who is going to be involved, what all does it affect, like curriculum, staff, what materials do you already have? You need to do a little bit of an assessment, like what do we already have? What can we get donated? What community members or parents do we have that might have contacts that might be able to get donations or things provided?

Shawna: So really kind of doing an inventory of everything. What staff members are going to jump on board? Which ones are going to try to squash this faster than you can get the word steam out of your mouth? One of the things I will say that I tried to steer, and it didn't happen at first. It did backfire a little bit, partially because they didn't listen, was that I wanted to get some of the naysayers in our crew, in on these meetings. They were adamantly against it for political reasons. At the end of the day I'm just a teacher, so you know, that's where that stands. But, I think that there would have been some more success if we could have pulled a few key naysayers in, so that they felt like they were more involved, so they felt like they were more informed, and we could have kind of leveraged that then to pull in some more people instead of any divide being created, that now we're still working, you know, to fix.

Susan: Hey there, it's Susan from Education Closet. It's that time of year friend. Conference time. We have just released our summer online arts integration and steam conference, and it's a big one. Bigger giveaways, big name keynotes, and some of the most exciting new strategies for arts integration and steam that we've ever seen. Right now, we have an early bird special. Through April 30th, you can get your ticket for just 99 bucks. Head over to [artsintegrationconference.com](http://artsintegrationconference.com) for all of the details. Now, let's get back to the conversation.



Matt: I mean, that reminds me of thinking about, as Laura was just saying, of the iPads, and the huge spectrum of people that dive in feet first, and then the people who are really highly resistant, I think the more you show, not necessarily tell, but the most you show to those naysayers, I think that slowly chips away at them. Then they kind of see where the benefits can happen. Then they kind of are like, oh, well, yeah. That's, yeah, okay. Then they kind of buy in, I think.

Laura: I was just thinking, you know, Matt, and I had an experience this week at Toyota USA, which is based here in Plato, plug for Toyota.

Matt: They moved from California to Texas.

Laura: Yeah. So they're just literally down the road from us. WE had an invitation to help judge the Toyota Dream Car Contest, which was wonderful. What was so impactful for me is that we live in an education bubble. I don't know how to explain that. But I mean, Matt and I are educators, our parents are educators, we hang out with educators. All of our friends are educators. Like, our-

Matt: We all have very like minds, for the most part. Very like minds.

Laura: So we think we know what's going on out there in the world. But, maybe we don't, because I felt like I was in an alternate universe. This is my second year going out there, and it's lovely, and the people are lovely, but just getting to hear them speak about what they're doing-

Matt: Their struggles, and the things that they're-

Laura: We were there with a designer from the Hot Wheels, from Hot Wheels. You know, Hot Wheels.

Matt: He was one of the lead designers.

Laura: Then a designer from Toyota, he does ... He works in Michigan where they're actually doing the clay cars, and doing all of these really cool things. Just hearing what they're ... How their art is integral in their design process, and you know, just talking ... Even, there were people from marketing there, there were people from communications there. There were a couple of dealership owners there. All of them had a connection to the arts in their careers and their daily lives and what they were doing. Just thinking about this naysayer, and showing them, obviously we're all believers, so that's not a problem. But if you had a



person that just didn't get it, maybe that ... I'm thinking about the education bubble. Maybe if you had a superintendent, or someone on the school board, that just didn't have it, maybe an experience like that, where they could see a real world application in their own community would help them see it.

Matt: See the benefits.

Shawna: Yeah, absolutely. You got to find out, and/or, you gotta' play the game a little bit. What's their connection to the arts? Because I feel like almost everyone in the world has some connection. Good, or bad, or ugly, and maybe it was something bad that turned them off of it.

Matt: Oh, absolutely.

Shawna: If you can find out what their connection is, I mean, we have one that it was loving to listen to Rush, or there is a certain band they love. Well, how can you, how could we, as the arts teachers, find a connection between their love, their connection to the arts, and what they teach, and bring them together? Because that's where I found we had the most success was finding those connections for them. That takes time of getting to know people, and that takes time, and that takes time and effort. I can't say that enough. But it's an investment.

Shawna: It pays off in the end when you get to know them. I also think it's important that people forget about a thank you afterwards. Even if it's just a thank you for listening, or hey, thanks, I'd love to do this, I'd love to try it out, or you know they love gummy candy, and you throw a little Swedish Fish with the ... Those are the things that you're going to get people to buy in more. It seems minuscule and silly, but come on, if someone threw your favorite treat in your mailbox, and it doesn't have to be expensive, and said thank you, or hey, I got an idea, you're going to be more intrigues, let's be honest.

Matt: Oh yeah.

Shawna: I think that's a missing component. We're too quick to just shoot an email. I think sometimes that personalization can go a long way with people.

Laura: Oh, I agree. Our superintendent sends each of us a hand signed Birthday card.

Shawna: That's awesome.



Laura: I mean, there is 6,000 employees in our district.

Shawna: Yes.

Laura: It's a real actual Birthday card. It's so sweet. It means something, you know?

Shawna: Absolutely. It's something so simple, I mean, yet it takes him time to do that. But it goes a long way. I think people forget about that, because you're going to ... People are going to have to step out of their comfort zones. Some people are more willing than others. I'm a gamer, I'm like, I'll try anything, you know. My kids know, we're going to learn this together, I'm not an expert on anything. I'm constantly learning and evolving. So are you ready to learn this together? I love when they teach me things. But not everyone is that open to that. So I think that you have to be ... You have to know where people come from, and what their intent is, and then figure out how you can make it work for where you need them to go.

Laura: That almost sounds more like a facilitator mindset in some ways.

Shawna: Yeah.

Laura: That's, I think, what's really hard for ... I think a lot of us have this impression that teachers are the sage of the stage, and they know everything, or that they're supposed to. That's not ... I mean, that's just not-

Shawna: That's my classroom. That's how I run it. I'm there to guide you, I'm going to give you a direction to go. Then go. It's hard for kids. That goes with ... Especially with steam, because I consider my classroom a steam classroom.

Laura: For sure.

Shawna: Because of what we do. Maker Space, innovation lab, whatever you want to call it. But getting the kids to be okay with potential failure, with, I don't necessarily know how this is going to turn out, I need to get feedback from people, from others, to figure out if I was on the right track, or how I can make, and/or how I can make this better. I tell my kids, your stuff is never perfect. They're like, uh, what do I do?

Matt: How dare you.



Shawna: What do I need to ... I'm like, no. You're going to go, I promise you by the end of 45 days with me, you're going to go back to the first thing, and the first thing they do with music, create a ringtone for a cell phone. That's my intro to the software, to Garage Band.

Matt: That's the buy in.

Shawna: Yeah, that's the buy in. I'm like, you're going to go back at the end of the marking period, and you're going to be like, oh my gosh, that is so terrible, how did you give me that grade? I'm like, because that's based on what you knew at that time. You have to be ready to evolve and learn along the process. Then everything you learn, you can keep using it. This is no, we learned this, we took a test, now brain flush, never going to use it again. Like, that's not the way my room works. It's hard to get kids to be okay with that, because they want that A, B, C, D, true/false, right/wrong, just want to move on. They don't ... Because that's the educational system we're in right now. So I think that arts integration, steam, the arts, we're what helps kind of break that down for kids, it's really going to prepare them for their futures, because there is no A, B, C, D, right/wrong when you get out in the workforce. Typically. I mean, sometimes, but not most of the time.

Matt: No. I find that really interesting, because as you're talking, I'm reflecting on my first semester this year, because I started teaching middle school, and there were so many times I came home, and I'm just like, oh my gosh, Lauren, I don't know what to do, because these kids were getting so frustrated with me because I was teaching very much the same way. They're like, well, tell me what to do. No, I'm not going to tell you what to do. I'm going to ... You need to take this information I gave you and go from there. They're just like, well, tell me how to do this. I'm like, well, I kind of already have. But now you need to kind of embrace it on your own.

Shawna: It's so hard for them.

Laura: It pretty much is that scavenging, that growth over time. I loved earlier you said that even in this steam lab, that there is this idea of a K through 12 vertical alignment, because that's key. I mean, I think we think that way because we're arts educators, and it's this spiral curriculum that everything grows, and it gets bigger as you go up. You're able, you're still going to use the elements of art whether you're in kindergarten or you're out in the workforce.



Shawna: Absolutely.

Laura: [crosstalk 00:35:02] shape, and color don't change, but the way you use them changes, right?

Matt: Or even that you use them.

Laura: Yeah, to what degree, absolutely. So I think that we have an ... I mean, I just said advantage.

Shawna: You can say it, we know it.

Laura: I just think we see things in a different way, because there is no you have to learn this for this test. It's, no, you have to learn this so that you can use it, so that you can build on it, so that you can create something. You know?

Shawna: Absolutely. I'll tell you, one of my favorite Tweets, I put this in every single slide deck I do, actually a mutual friend of ours, Trevor Bryan-

Laura: Oh yeah, we love Trevor.

Shawna: I love Trevor.

Laura: Can't wait to see him soon.

Shawna: I know, I know. He's so close to me it's not even funny. He's like an hour from me.

Laura: Oh, that's awesome.

Shawna: But anyways, my favorite Tweet from him is "If you aren't letting your students get stuck, struggle, make things that don't work out, feel lost, confused, and unsure, then you are not teaching creativity. Creativity isn't about certainty, it dances with the unknown." That is like brilliant, because that is exact ... When I read that, I was like, screenshot, because it's so true. Like, there is days I've had, I will own it. I've had kids, tears in their eyes, because there is no right or wrong answer. But then, at the end of the day, when they've finished that project because they did it, and they made the choices, and I was there to help guide them, and support them, and they're so proud. They look at you, and they say, thank you. It's all worth it. It's all worth it. They get it.





- Matt: No. I, yeah. We can talk on this-
- Shawna: I know, I'm sorry, forever.
- Matt: No, no, no, not at all. I mean, it's an amazing conversation to have. We're always amazed at the people we talk to-
- Laura: We get so excited, because it is true, that moment, that thank you at the end, it's that pride that they did it. They created this.
- Shawna: They didn't regurgitate what I told them to do. They made it. They put a piece of them in it. I think that soulful connection that the arts bring, and that's ... I think that's part of what makes the A in STEM important. Sorry, steam, A to STEM important in steam is that passion, that creativity, that innovation, that willingness to kind of put a piece of you in the work you're doing. I think that's what people miss.
- Laura: Absolutely. That's why you had messaged me about SEL not too long ago, and I just, I can't say this enough, the arts are the original SEL curriculum.
- Shawna: Yes, they are. They are.
- Laura: I'm like, why are we going out and reinventing. We just did a huge SEL show, and I didn't have to create any curriculum for that.
- Shawna: No, I know. It's funny, because when I messaged you, it was because another administrator was asking me to. I know that, but I'm like, I'm going to see what strategies, or what they've done, or if they have a website that I can point, because I've sent them ... I immediately sent your podcast with Elizabeth, I sent [crosstalk 00:38:14], and I'm sending them all kinds of stuff. They get it, but it's just ... You just have to keep reinforcing it. I feel like sometimes you can't force it, they have to come to that conclusion. That you can support it, you can keep informing them, but at the end of the day, they have to ... They've got to realize it.
- Laura: But that moment you talked about at the end, where the kid gets it, and they feel that pride, that is SEL.
- Shawna: Yes.
- Laura: That's social emotional learning.



Shawna: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Laura: Because that's understanding that determination and working through a problem, and coming out the other side, and feeling good about it, that is SEL. That's it right there.

Shawna: Yep.

Matt: Can't really quantitate that.

Laura: There is no numbers to say that that's ... You know, that's the hardest thing about what we do, so much of what we do is qualitative, not quantitative.

Shawna: Correct. We have to put numbers on it for sake of grades, and our evaluations, and things like that. But, I feel like I don't necessarily focus on all of that, because it's not really the why I do what I do and how I do what I do. We've got to grade them on projects, of course. I always struggle with the compliance versus creativity and things like that, and how we ... Because we have to have objective data to back what's happening. I feel like we do so much more that's just not able to be captured, other than in these amazing moments with our students. At the end of the day, that's what I love, and cherish, and care about. I get it done.

Matt: All right, so before we end up going a whole 'nother hour of conversating-

Shawna: I know.

Matt: No, no. It's fine.

Laura: It's just us two.

Matt: We kept feeding into this conversation, so it just keeps going. So what kind of parting words, words of wisdom, do you think you might be able to share with someone who may not feel confident, yet, enough to take this on, or how do you even go about taking it on?

Shawna: I feel like it's all what your intent is. It's all about intention. What do you want to do, and what do you want your kids to do? You can have a Maker Space steam environment anywhere. Mine is in my general music classroom. As we started this conversation, I've never seen that, how can that be? Right? So I feel like it could be a corner of your room. It doesn't even have to be an area within your



classroom, it can just be something going on. If we focus on the five step to the steam process, are the kids investigating? Discovering? Asking questions? Connecting with their building knowledge, creating something new? Then reflecting on it, which often we're so under the gun with time, we forget about the reflection. To me, that's the most important part of the whole process.

Laura: Yay.

Shawna: Like, it's got to happen. They need time to self reflect, peer reflect, talk, communicate, and then fix stuff, make it better. I think that if you those things are happening, then you're doing it. Don't worry about the stuff. Don't worry about making sure it's perfectly aligned. Just do what you know feels right, and at the end of the day, what's your kids' experience, and what's your intention? It all comes down, for me, to intention.

Laura: Intention.

Matt: Intention.

Laura: Yeah, we have a book, not our book.

Matt: No, no, not our book.

Laura: [crosstalk 00:41:45] Dan Rider wrote a book called Intention.

Shawna: Oh, really?

Laura: It's all about creativity and infusing creativity in your classroom. It's called Intention.

Shawna: I didn't even know that. I'm going to check it out.

Laura: Yeah, I'll send you a screenshot of it. It's wonderful.

Shawna: Awesome. I'll put it on my list.

Matt: Well, we can't thank you enough Shawna, it's been a really fun and exciting conversation. So we just, we appreciate you coming on, and talking with us.

Shawna: Thank you guys for having me. This was so much fun. We'll have to do it again sometime.



Matt: Oh yeah, absolutely.

Laura: Definitely. All right. Thank you Shawna.

Matt: Thanks Shawna.

Laura: Have a good night. Bye.

Matt: Bye.

Shawna: Bye.

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